

January 10, 2012

## **STATEMENT ISSUED BY THE DALHOUSIE VARSITY WOMEN'S HOCKEY TEAM**

The Dalhousie Varsity Women's Hockey Team, including the first year players, would like to convey our regret for the incident that has recently been described as a rookie hazing event and the impact it's had on the community. We held a party with the intention of welcoming new players to our team, and everyone who wanted to do so drank but alcohol was not forced on anyone. The first years waited in a room as the evening's events were prepared. They were sent on a scavenger hunt to find whipped cream, hot peppers, and sardines which they were later asked to eat. They then returned to dress up in odd clothing, play drinking games, and answer questions with the intention of getting to know everyone better and feeling more comfortable as part of the group. No one was forced to do anything. Throughout the evening, senior members of the team looked out for the first years to ensure that they would come to no harm. Some first years slept over at the party house and were kept safe overnight.

Our team is our family. We are best friends, people we would never intentionally hurt. We apologize for any mistakes we made that night and acknowledge that we have learned valuable lessons from this experience. To know that something we did could have hurt anyone on the team feels awful, and we have conveyed these feelings to the first years. It is important that people remain aware of the negative effects of bullying, and how easily someone could unknowingly participate. This is a message that we would like to convey to the community. As varsity athletes, we were deeply integrated into the Halifax community, and we believe that the best way to spread our message is to do so as members of the Dalhousie Varsity Women's Hockey Team.

We believe that our punishment far exceeds the severity of the events that occurred at the party and have proposed, as an alternative, that we be allowed to speak publicly about our mistakes. In other words, we are proposing a restorative remedy that would benefit the community, rather than a punishment that shames us and tarnishes our individual reputations forever. Hockey is our life, and to have that taken away from us is huge. We have asked President Dr Traves for an opportunity to restore our image to the community so that everyone can move forward from this.

A serious problem with the punishment we received is that the first year players were also punished by the loss of their hockey team. The first years feel more wronged by the University than they do by the event itself. We are also concerned that the overreaction of the university and

the severity of this punishment could result in silencing first year players on other teams if far more serious events occur in the future.

One of our major concerns about the reaction of the University is the way in which the complaint was handled. From the moment we were informed of the investigation we were treated unfairly. What was described to us as a restorative process turned out to be the complete opposite; those who said they were our confidants turned around and became our interrogators. Generally when a Student Code of Conduct violation is alleged, a specific process is to be followed, and in our case this process was thrown out the window. As interviews became interrogations we voiced our concerns but nothing changed. Ambiguous questions were asked and answers were taken out of context which could have led to misinterpretation of the event. We feel as though our naivety was taken advantage of, and we let this happen because we trusted the University officials to hold true to their words. We believed in the institution and its ability to guide us the right way and we were betrayed.

This past week we have been painted as criminals by the University. We have been made to feel as though we are barbaric and horrible people. We'd like to remind the community that we are much more than those one-sided words. First and foremost, we are students of Dalhousie University. We have a large proportion of Academic All-Canadians, and we are all proud of our studies. We are also prominent figures in the community, participating in many events such as Easter Seals, Special Olympics, work at local elementary schools and hospitals, and our annual Pink in the Rink breast cancer awareness game. For several years now, our team has put together the most Operation Christmas Child boxes of any varsity team. We feel that we have been grossly misrepresented by the University and the media.

Through this process all 22 players, including the five first year players who were not part of the official punishment, feel incredibly wronged by Dalhousie University. We are proud Tigers, but it's getting harder to feel pride when the very University we work so hard for has turned around and betrayed us. Through this year we have endured heavy adversity and have received very little support from our school. With no home rink we were prepared to play out of New Glasgow, while the men get priority and play in Halifax at the Forum. This is how much we love the game and we love playing for our school. What we were told were going to be unbiased interviews intended to find out the truth of the situation were actually aggressive interrogations that left us feeling intimidated and disrespected; what we were told would be a restorative process led to a punishment that has left us feeling betrayed and rejected. Ironically, these are the same feelings we are accused of inciting through the supposed act of hazing.